

Meals and Incidental Travel Expenses

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Administrative

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Policy Owner:

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Procedures:

- **I. General Meal Per Diem Guidelines**

Meals are reimbursable on a per diem basis (not actual expenses) for overnight official business travel outside the traveler's Primary Work Station. The Institute's Financial system will provide the proper per diem amounts based on travel to specific cities. Daily meal allowances include taxes/meal tips and are divided into breakfast/lunch/dinner amounts to allow travelers to deduct specific meals, where required. Per diem expenses do not require receipts to be provided. A formal written agenda which includes session times and any meals provided is required as supporting documentation for conferences, meetings and training.

Meal per diem rates outside the State of Georgia are based on Department of Defense per diem rates (GSA for the Continental US, U.S. Department of State (DOS) for foreign overseas locations, and Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO) for Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico) and are automatically updated and loaded into the Institute's Financial system. Meal rates for the State of Georgia are restricted to the meal per diem allowances provided by the State Accounting Office. See the following link to meal per diem allowances on the State Accounting Office website: <https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy>.

Reimbursement for meals within a 50-mile radius of an employee's headquarters or residence is generally not allowable, unless in conjunction with a Georgia Tech sponsored event (see section 6.14 - Retreats and Campus Workshops for Faculty and Staff) or approved to provide support during a campus emergency.

Actual incidental expenses are reimbursed separately and include fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel housekeeping, and hotel staff.

II. Required Meal Claim Deductions

If meals are provided at a conference or if meals are part of a conference fee, the meals must be deducted from the per diem reimbursement for each meal provided. Meal deductions include those provided by hotels, meetings, conferences, or any other source. If a breakfast, lunch, dinner, or reception is offered as part of the travel event and the quantity of food and event timing is sufficient to serve as a meal, the traveler must reduce the per diem by the appropriate allowance amount. If a meal is offered as part of a conference and the traveler has medical restrictions, dietary, or religious convictions that restrict or prohibit consumption, the traveler should make every effort to have the conference facilitate his/her needs by the deadline specified by the conference. If the conference does not honor the request, the traveler is not required to deduct the applicable meal allowance from the per diem. However, the traveler must include a note or other documentation with the Travel Expense Report to document this information.

III. Meal Expenses Associated with Overnight Travel (Non-High Cost Areas in Georgia)

Employees traveling overnight will be paid a per diem amount designed to cover the cost of three meals per day for all days of travel. See the following link to meal per diem allowances on the State Accounting Office website: <https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy>. Employees traveling overnight within the State of Georgia non-high cost areas will receive 100% reimbursement on the first and last day of travel, less any provided meal(s).

Employees whose headquarters are out of state and are visiting a non-high cost Georgia location will be reimbursed for 75% of the per diem amount on first and last day.

In all cases, deductions must also be made for any meals that have been provided.

IV. Meal Expenses Associated with Overnight Travel within High Cost Areas in Georgia

The State Accounting Office defines 'High Cost' areas as those locations limited to the following counties: Chatham (Savannah), Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton (Atlanta), Glynn (Brunswick) and Richmond (Augusta).

Employees are considered traveling in high cost areas of Georgia when their official responsibilities must be performed at a location in the high cost area. See the following link to meal per diem allowances on the State Accounting Office website: <https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy>. Employees traveling overnight within the State of Georgia high cost areas will receive 100% reimbursement on the first and last day of travel, less any provided meal(s).

Employees whose headquarters are out of state of Georgia and are visiting a high cost Georgia location will be reimbursed for 75% of the per diem amount on the first and last day.

Deductions must also be made for any meals that have been provided (as described in section II above).

V. Meal Expenses Associated with Overnight Travel outside Georgia (Domestic U.S. and International Travel)

Meal expenses will be paid for the federal per diem (less the federal "incidentals" allowance)

rate established for the travel destination. The Institute's Financial system will pull rates effective at the time of travel for the travel location where the employee spends the night.

Travelers are eligible for 75% of the total per diem rate on the first and last day of travel, and deductions must be made for any meals that have been provided (as described in section II above).

VI. Meal Per Diem During Non-Overnight Travel: One-Day Trips

Employees on Institute business with no overnight travel involved, or who are on one day trips, are not eligible for any meal per diem allowance. This also applies to employees whose headquarters are based out of the State of Georgia.

Each department head or their delegate is to determine the reasonableness of when an overnight stay is justified.

VII. Per diem allowances are calculated based on the last business location of the travel day. For overnight travel, the calculation is based on the location of lodging for each night of travel. For the final return date, the meal per diem is based on the location of the prior night's lodging.

For trips involving multiple travel destinations, base the reduction on the per diem rate in effect where the night was spent as follows:

- Departure Day: Where you spend the night.
- Return Day: Where you spent the night before returning to your Residence or Primary Work Station

VIII. Entertainment Expenses

Entertainment expenses are processed through the Georgia Tech Foundation or GTRC, using appropriate Foundation or GTRC funds.

IX. Special Approval for Meals Associated with Campus Emergencies

Meals may be allowable for extraordinary situations when Georgia Tech employees are required by their supervisor to work more than a twelve-hour workday or six hours on a non-scheduled weekend, to meet crucial deadlines or handle campus emergencies, such as weather events. All special meal (and associated hotel) needs must have prior approval from the President's Office (or his delegates), unless specific authority for approval has been delegated to a department head for a period not to exceed one fiscal year.

X. Group Catering/Meeting Meal Expenses

Refer to the [Group Meal Policy 5.2.19](#) for the policy regarding allowable meal expenses related to intra-departmental meetings or training sessions.